

## **RANDY E. BENDEL**

February 16, 2016

Commission on Judicial Performance  
455 Golden Gate Avenue, Suite 14400  
San Francisco, CA 94102

### **Re: Honorable Thomas Trent Lewis (Los Angeles County)**

Dear Honorable Commission Members,

This matter concerns several judges in Los Angeles County and statewide if one takes the time to look around on LinkedIn and one judge in particular. The biggest offender is clearly Thomas Trent Lewis in Los Angeles.

Incredibly, Judge Lewis has maintained a LinkedIn account since he was appointed to the bench in or about 2006. The LinkedIn account clearly promotes the financial interests of Judge Lewis. The LinkedIn account promotes Judge Lewis in general. It raises the obvious question of who are the links.

Judge Lewis has over 500 connections and it is not clear who the connections are, but it is a practical certainty that Judge Lewis has "connections" who are attorneys who appear before him and also to whom he sends referrals from the bench. Part of the problem lies in the fact that no one is allowed to see who the connections are without being a connection. It appears to be a "network" which creates a clear appearance adverse to any impartial sense of justice.

The use of LinkedIn account also creates unmonitored emails which can easily be used for *ex parte* communications. Worse yet, what happens if some counsel asks to be part of the network and is rejected? Judge Lewis effectively promotes sales of his Rutter Group Practice Guide on his LinkedIn website as well as his seminars..

Additionally, Judge Lewis promotes his membership in the America Academy of matrimonial lawyers. The only reason is so that Judge Lewis can accept referral fees for referring cases. The same is true of his association with the International Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers. Judge Lewis has no business promoting his membership in any association of attorneys. As a sitting member of the bench, Judge Lewis should not belong to any bar association.

Judge Lewis also posts recommendations on his website. Why is any judge allowed to post recommendations? Why does any judge need a recommendation?

Why is Judge Lewis promoting his job skills or allowed to promote his job skills while sitting on the bench? Who is promoting these skills for him? It is obvious that

some of those promoting him also appear before him. It smacks of corruption. The one skill not promoted is ethics.

Judge Lewi's conduct clearly violates Canon 2.B. which requires judges not to advance the pecuniary interests of himself or others. In this case, Judge Lewis is effectively using his public office for personal gain in brazen, open fashion. He is promoting his publications and the Rutter Group. He is advertising for former law firms. He might as well hand out flyers in his courtroom.

This complaint also concerns the following named Los Angeles Superiors Court Judges for the same practice: Judge Brian Currey, Philip Soto and Donna Groman. Judge Currey should not be promoting O'Melveny & Myers.

There are also judges who are anonymously on LinkedIn. This raises the same concerns except for the fact that no one knows who these judges are which makes it impossible to identify them.

This is an issue on which the Commission should take some action in conjunction with the Judicial Council. No excuses should be made for Judge Lewis.

The last complaint with respect to Judge Lewis is that he continues to maintain an online profile at: <http://aaml.org/divorce-lawyer-los-angeles-california-thomas-lewis> in which he continues to hold himself out as an attorney when he is listed as inactive and also while he is sitting on the bench. Judge Lewis also maintains a twitter account which is improper and inconsistent with the appearance of impartiality.

If you view the foregoing web page, Judge Lewis also states that he was lawyer of the year in 2004 by the Mass. Inns of Court. This is a false claim as is claim that he was one of the top 10 lawyers in 2001 as voted by the Mass. Inns of Court.

The real reason Judge Lewis maintains this association is to receive referral fees from attorneys. Paragraph 5 of the AAML membership criteria states that: "5. The applicant must be a practicing attorney and not a sitting judge, unless the judge meets all the other standards: i.e., is in the active practice of law while being a sitting judge, and has had substantial involvement in the matrimonial law field, as defined above."

Judge Lewis is not a practicing attorney and is fraudulently maintaining membership in the AAML. The only reason is to promote himself and to take referral fees.

Yours Sincerely,

Randy E. Bendel